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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT KOCHARYAN TAKES OWNERSHIP OF NEW
CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

1. On September 30, at a conference to mark the 10th Anniversary of the Adoption of the Armenian Constitution and the Formation of the Constitutional Court, President Kocharian emphasized the importance of upcoming Constitutional Reforms to the establishment of rule of law in Armenia. In his remarks (informal Embassy translation below,) President Kocharian gave his strongest endorsement to date to the package of Constitutional Amendments, now final after a September 29 "third reading" in parliament.

2. Begin text of informal Embassy translation:

Yerevan, September 30, 2005

Dear participants,

I am glad that over the past decade it has become a tradition for Yerevan to host international conferences on constitutional justice. This time we are celebrating a jubilee and given the composition of participants and the urgency of issues on the agenda, I believe that this conference will make a considerable theoretical and practical contribution.

Armenia is heading towards serious constitutional reforms. The experience of numerous countries shows that constitutional stagnation is dangerous. Being experts, you are well aware that constitutional solutions should be in tune with societal developments and foster them.

Our current Constitution played a significant role in developing, and making irreversible, democracy in Armenia, thereby allowing our country to become a member of the Council of Europe. In applying the Constitution, however, it became apparent that the document contained serious conceptual drawbacks which created obstacles for further democratic development of the country. Now we need to establish constitutional guarantees for rule of law and due process.

We have held fruitful discussions for a number of years with European institutions, including the Venice Commission and now, we are nearing the finishing post. Soon we will learn the decision of our people concerning the draft constitutional amendments. This draft document ensures that we will make considerable progress in guaranteeing human rights, promoting the separation of powers and assuring that our system contains checks and balances. It provides greater independence for the judicial branch and brings more autonomy to local governments.

Our goal is to make the Constitution a living reality. It should be more accessible for each citizen of the country. Rule of law and due process should become the focus of a public life structured on liberal values. This is imperative now.

I believe that discussions at this conference will focus on our reality and will help society to fully realize the importance of constitutional developments. It is beyond any doubt that the conference will receive wide international publicity.

Thank you for visiting Armenia and taking part at this anniversary event. I wish you successful work at the conference and hope that you enjoy your stay in Armenia.

End text.

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